



## A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

### **Welcome!**

As the new Chairperson of the BirdWatch Ireland Galway Branch, I would like to address the importance of the Birdwatch Ireland Galway Branch *Newsletter* reaching its 100<sup>th</sup> edition with the previous issue – which could not have become a reality without the efforts of Neil Sharkey. Between 1993 and 2018, he has gathered and prepared numerous articles and features into *Newsletters* that see Galway Branch members and those further afield eagerly await his name pop up in their inbox to read the latest issue. In the 100<sup>th</sup> issue Neil comments on the generation of *the Newsletter*, “The general idea was to inform Galway members of branch happenings and forthcoming events and rare, unusual and first-of-season bird sightings”, which most readers will agree has become something more significant. With no sign of stopping, albeit on a less frequent basis, Neil will continue to edit the *Newsletter*. Indeed, while thanking him, I am also including my sincere thanks to all past committee members for their support in the recent re-establishment of the branch committee.

### **So far, so good**

The newly established committee hit the ground running with a suite of events, including very well-attended National Dawn Chorus Day events, in Galway led by Chris Peppiatt, and in Portumna led by Colin Heaslip and Niall Keogh. Tom Cuffe has also been continuing his Trojan work on behalf of BirdWatch Ireland in leading the Nimmo’s Pier outings along with conducting workshops at various festivals and bespoke outings around the county. The branch will have a new line-up of events coming up shortly so do keep an eye on our website <http://www.birdwatchgalway.org/> and our Facebook page for regular updates.

### **Birding is for everyone!**

Sometimes, people’s understanding of the requirements for birdwatching gets over-complicated and misconstrued: that you need more degrees than an oven! Ornithology, twitching, birding, bird watching, it all stems from the same – an interest in birds. Many birders share a common trait insofar as they began birding almost as toddlers. My own interest in wildlife has led me to develop an appreciation of our Irish birdlife and the wonderfully special adaptations birds have developed to make each species very special actors in our natural landscape. I would like to encourage anyone with an interest in our wildlife to stick on the kettle, sit down and look out your window to watch whatever birds you can spot as long as it takes to drink your tea and notice the mannerisms and personalities of the birds you see. If it is of interest to you, you may want to learn more. If so, check out our website, Facebook page and the Branch Events page in the national BirdWatch Ireland quarterly *Wings* for all the events we have coming up and do come along! It is never too late to start watching birds – we hope to see you all at some of our upcoming events.

**Colin Heaslip**

## BREEDING MERLIN IN CONNEMARA

As a Conservation Ranger with the National Parks and Wildlife Service I have been monitoring breeding Merlin within the Connemara Bog Complex Special Protection Area since 2012. The SPA was designated in 2010 and is 19,210 hectares in size. Merlin is one of four breeding bird species listed under Annex II of the EU Birds Directive for which this site has been designated, the others being Cormorant, Golden Plover and Common Gull. The only previous complete Merlin survey covering the area of the SPA was carried out in 1985 when pairs were located at twelve different sites (eight were ultimately successful) by Paul Haworth and Padraic Reaney. Aonghus O’Donail, a NPWS colleague of mine, also undertook survey work in the eastern side of the SPA in more recent years.

Connemara breeding Merlin are unique amongst Irish Merlin in that, unlike most other Irish breeders, they generally do not utilise forestry edges (namely conifer plantations) and, unlike many UK breeders, they do not nest on the ground. Connemara Merlin use old Hooded Crow nests on islands situated in the many loughs distributed widely and numerous in the extensive blanket bog. As is the case with all falcons, they don’t build their own nests and have no real nest maintenance skills. Therefore, after using a crow’s nest for one season, they are obliged to find a new nest the following year. This means that pairs have to move to a different island or, more often than not, move to an entirely new lough each year - which makes locating nests rather challenging. Peregrines and cliff-nesting Kestrels can use the same ledge year in year out, making life a lot easier for the fieldworker. Merlin are also notoriously secretive during the breeding season and can prove tough to pin down, especially early in the season before the eggs are laid, showing little evidence of their presence. They can also be sensitive to disturbance during the egg stage of the breeding cycle. Various survey methods have been tried, including vantage point watches over suitable nesting locations and plucking posts searches, which are the two most frequently used techniques. Playback of Merlin alarm calls has also been deployed to disappointing levels of success.

I found over the last few seasons that to ultimately confirm breeding requires one to swim out to each suitable island and climb up to each crows’ nest present to inspect the contents. Even then, pairs have been known to escape breeding confirmation when seen using a particularly small island! Traipsing over kilometres of open quaking bog, across deep bog streams, around long irregular-shaped loughs, scrambling through thick island undergrowth and climbing up trees in a dry suit at the height of summer is exhausting work. Most of these islands are incredibly rich in flora due to the lack of the constant heavy grazing of sheep that is so common in Connemara. Some fine examples of Yew trees can be seen, some of which must surely be several hundred years old. At a rough count, Roundstone Bog alone contains approximately 280 different loughs. Fortunately, most do not have suitable islands to search.

Over the past five years, I have recorded twenty successful breeding attempts, all in the western part

of the SPA. The SPA consists of three separated polygons/parts and my work has concentrated on the western-most and middle polygons, i.e. Roundstone Bog and the bog between Recess and Kilkieran. All chicks are ringed with the help of John Lusby and Irene O’Brien. Due to the small numbers ringed so far, the only recovery to date has been a 20km north-west movement of a chick from Roundstone Bog out to the coast just two months after its ringing in 2016. The deployment of satellite tags would prove invaluable. Little is known of Irish Merlin during the breeding season (how far away do males hunt from the nest, what are the important foraging habitats, etc.). Nothing is really known about Merlin outside of the breeding season, e.g. do the adults remain on the territories all year round, how far do young birds roam in their first year or two before settling down to breed, do they return to their natal grounds?

A Merlin Pilot Survey was undertaken from 2010 to determine what the best survey methods would be to assess the Irish breeding population. The results were quite mixed and there does not seem to be any one sure way of surveying the species. As Merlin is a listed Annex II species, there is a legal onus on Ireland to monitor it to establish the status of the species. Merlin is now a “feature of interest” for six Special Protection Areas around the country. It seems to be a slightly neglected bird of prey species if one compares it to Hen Harrier with whom it shares several different features but differs in how it has been studied in recent decades. Both species possibly have a similar population size, are reliant on open countryside and have also possibly declined due to land-use changes such as afforestation. Up to this year, there have been four national Hen Harrier surveys compared to zero national Merlin surveys.

Acknowledging the difficulties in surveying this sprightly and feisty little falcon, a national survey for the species has been ongoing this breeding season for the first time ever. Connemara has been leading the way in results so far with five confirmed nests. All of these have been in the western part of the SPA. The only other SPA with confirmed breeding to date has been Derryveagh and Glendowan SPA in County Donegal with just two pairs. The year 2018 has proved to be one of the worst breeding seasons for many birds of prey in the last decade due to the prolonged cold spring. This probably has resulted in the failure of many normally successful Merlin pairs in the other SPAs. All in all, Connemara has done relatively well considering.

**Dermot Breen**

## MAJOR R.F. RUTLEDGE

Robert (known also as Robin) Rutledge stands high in the world of Irish ornithology. Born in 1899 of Anglo-Irish ancestry, his early love of birds was, no doubt, fostered by the countryside around the Bloomfield family home and estate near Hollymount, Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo. He served in the Indian army of the British empire for a long time and, on his retirement in 1942, lived for many years in Newcastle, Co. Wicklow. This long, sixty-year, post-retirement period was devoted to the study and benefit of Irish birds. He was the author of over 200 articles and books and founder and first chairman of the then Irish Wildbird Conservancy (now BirdWatch



Ireland). I had many years of correspondence with him, his writing being old-fashioned and unbelievably difficult to decipher. However, if he did not answer your letter immediately on the day he received it, he would apologise for the 'delay' when answering a few days later! His main interests in later years were the winter appearance of Blackcaps and the Galway recordings of Little Gulls. He spent his final years in a nursing home in Cummer near Tuam and during those years I used to visit him regularly. As one would expect, he had a huge store of recollections and facts of his Irish birdwatching activities. One incident I recall him recounting was of being stranded and storm-bound on the almost perpendicular Stags of Broadhaven off the north-west coast of Mayo but he thought nothing of the danger and discomfort as it enabled him to confirm the presence of nesting Leach's Petrel - the first time this had been proven in Ireland.

He died in January 2002, having been alive during the course of the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries! He is buried in the Church of Ireland Hollymount cemetery.

My reason for setting out this short piece on Major Rutledge's life and work is to give a background to a proposed series on 'A List of the Birds of the Counties Galway and Mayo', beginning with part of his introduction to that article in this *Newsletter*. In this and following issues I will attempt to give readers an appreciation of the style and manner of the birdwatching in what is now a long-past era, illustrating the precise and, perhaps to us, old-fashioned use of prose, and the names of the contributors possibly reflecting a different social background to that of today's birdwatchers.

**NS**

Robert F. Rutledge, 'A List of the Birds of the Counties Galway and Mayo: Showing their Status and Distribution' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Section B: Biological, Geological, and Chemical Science*, Vol. 52 (1948–1950), pp 315-381.

### Introduction

In the following list in which the birds are treated in the order given in the *Handbook of British Birds*, I have endeavoured to show their distribution, the times of arrival and departure of summer and winter visitors and to give notes on the status of each species, in particular drawing a comparison with the status where it differs in any marked degree from the time that Ussher wrote in *Birds of Ireland*, 1900 and the Clare Island Survey, 1912. These differences are summarised at the end of this introduction. Much of the information about the records of the rarer species has already been given in a fragmentary form in ornithological books and journals. For that reason, as well as in the hope of putting on record present day status, this list seems desirable.

With the exception of Warren's life-long observation of Killala Bay and work on the Clare Island Survey these two important counties have been much neglected. Having for many years lived in Co. Mayo, I have had the opportunity to explore it and the neighbouring County of Galway intensively at all seasons.

The late Messrs C.B. Moffatt and H.F. Witherby both impressed upon me the importance of publishing a bird-list of these little-worked counties.

To be continued in the next *Newsletter*. **NS**

### LOUGH ATALIA

Birders could do worse than spending some time living in Galway City. The species diversity might be lower than that found in the south and east of the country but the mix of habitats within the city boundaries and the west coast location mean that there is always something interesting to look at. Aonghus O'Donail compiled a list of species seen within the city limits in 2014 and came up with a total of 145. Not bad at all!

I came to Galway from Dublin in September 2016 and was fortunate to move in right beside Lough Atalia, one of the more prominent pieces of habitat around the city. With nice views over the lough from the balcony as well as the shore forming part of my commute into GMT, it was a no-brainer that the lough would become my new birding patch. I consider it my front garden! This article is a summary of the species I have seen around the lough as well as mentions of some historical records of note.

Like most wetland habitats within a city, calls are often made to drain these 'smelly' sites and do something more 'useful' with them. I can't deny that Lough Atalia sometimes has a bit of a pong off it but there is good reason for it. Lough Atalia is an estuarine lagoon, with salinity levels often lower than the nearby intertidal coastline. The lough bed features relatively bare, soft mud which, when disturbed, is found to be black, smelling of hydrogen sulphide and, thus, anoxic. The invertebrate fauna of the lough is typical of such habitats and there are no aquatic vegetation features which would mark the site to be of conservation value. However, the lough is included within the boundaries of the Galway Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC) thanks to the Atlantic salt meadow along the eastern side of the site, the presence of Otter and the occasional Common (Harbour) Seal. The habitat conservation status of Lough Atalia has been assessed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) as being 'Unfavourable to Bad' with major problems surrounding water quality (eutrophication and pollution) plus potential threats such as urbanisation, dumping and silting.

Taking birds into account, the lough forms part of the overall Inner Galway Bay Special Protection Area (SPA) with features of interest including breeding terns and wintering and passage waterbirds. The latter are monitored during Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS) counts undertaken by the BirdWatch Ireland Galway Branch up to three times per season (usually November, January and March). In the past year or so, weekly counts have been conducted by Sean Walsh and me, with those sightings and records submitted to eBird. These counts are presented in the Appendix of this newsletter and cover the main scope of this report from September 2016 to present (July 2018).

Over the course of the year, the lough provides foraging and roosting opportunities for many

waterbirds, the most notable of which being Shelduck (93 in February 2018), Wigeon (175 in January 2018), Gadwall (seemingly increasing year on year with a peak of 78 in February 2018), Little Egret (abundant between July and September with 30 birds in July 2018), Little Grebe (between 20 and 30 in early winter), Lapwing (winter roost flocks sometimes reach 250 birds), Greenshank (peak of 18 in July 2018) and Redshank (high tide roost flocks of 50+ are regular, with larger counts of 80-120 birds recorded in late summer and early autumn). The greatest abundance of waterbirds can be found in December and January when over 1,000 birds may use the site. Abundance dips to a low of less than 200 birds in May and June. Three species can be found at Lough Atalia in numbers which regularly equal or surpass the 1% threshold for national importance as outlined by I-WeBS: Gadwall, Little Egret and Little Grebe. A flock of 120 Black-tailed Godwits on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2018 would also seem to qualify but their occurrence was a one off, perhaps birds displaced from nearby sites in Galway Bay that normally hold them such as Kilcaimin.

The lough was once a well-known site for diving duck species, particularly Scaup and Goldeneye. Their numbers have dropped right off in recent years and their occurrence is now sporadic. Somewhere in the region of 20-30 Scaup were once a regular sight here and counts of Goldeneye could often reach double figures. The winter of 2017/18 featured three Scaup for several weeks and a very brief appearance by eight Goldeneye. One female Scaup also showed up in May 2018, which was notable for the time of year. Both species are undergoing steep winter population declines in Ireland with climate change being implicated as a potential factor. Many birds no longer travel as far west from their breeding grounds to winter in Ireland and stop off in the UK or continental Europe instead (a process known as 'short-stopping'). It has also been suggested that the Scaup flock may have relocated to Lough Corrib. That being said, a welcome peak in the Scaup flock count in recent years involved 65 birds on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2009, rising to 80 by the month's end. Long-tailed Duck was seemingly a more frequent visitor in the past (1-3 birds often found here in late winter/spring per Major Rutledge) but in recent decades single birds only have been noted in December 2001, January 2002, October 2005 and November 2007. Envious records of male Smew (one of the most attractive looking ducks) involved single birds in January 1979, 1982, 1986 and more recently on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2003. Goosander has been recorded once, with a 'redhead' (female/immature bird) present from New Year's Eve 1980 into January 1981. At the time, this was just the fifth or sixth county record. Two species of Nearctic (North American) duck have been recorded on the lough. A first-winter male American Wigeon on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1996 was just the second county record at the time and a male Ring-necked Duck, present between January and April 1994, was presumed to have been the same bird seen here again in 1995 when it was present between February and March.

Mullet, European Eel, Flounder, Goby, Stickleback and Smelt are some of the fish known to occur in the lough and with those come the piscivorous species such as Cormorant, Grey Heron and Little Egret



which can be seen throughout the year. At any given stage of the year it is usual to see half a dozen or so Cormorants roosting on the exposed rocks near the railway bridge but an exceptionally high count of 250 birds on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2010 must have been quite a sight! The occasional immature Shag can be found with the Cormorant roosting, in winter, Great Crested Grebes make infrequent appearances and a small flock of between two and eight Red-breasted Mergansers can be seen actively foraging. The Little Grebe flock is usually found scattered along the eastern shoreline and disappears for a few months in the summer (but breeding is known to occur at the nearby Renmore Lagoon). There is a single record of Slavonian Grebe on the lough, of two birds present on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012.

Being tucked away behind the railway line and docks ensures that the lough does not get much in the way of 'true' seabirds but a Leach's Petrel, driven in by foul weather on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2006, goes to show to you can always expect the unexpected.

Regular attendees of the monthly branch walks at Nimmo's Pier will know that Dunlin, Ringed Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit can all be found with relative ease along the shore between there and Mutton Island; yet, despite their close proximity to Lough Atalia during winter, each of these three species is a rarity here. The lack of large open expanses of mud or sand in the lough at low tide is probably the reason and those waders which are regularly found on the lough (Redshank, Greenshank, Curlew, Oystercatcher and Turnstone) tend to prefer the stone, mud and seaweed type of shoreline habitat for foraging. Lapwing can sometimes be seen foraging along the lough shore but they are usually noted here in roosting flocks. Presumably, they feed elsewhere nearby at night. Common Snipe occur in the saltmarsh along the eastern side of the lough during winter and a few can be seen sitting out on exposed rocks along the shoreline but a telescope is needed for good views. During the cold snap in March 2018, a total of 46 Common Snipe came into view, pushed out into the open by the inclement weather. The true number present at that time was almost certainly much higher. Five Jack Snipe and a single European Golden Plover were also present with them (species brought here by the hard weather). Single figure counts of Common Sandpiper are regular between July and September (high count of 14 on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2018) whereas spring records are less frequent. The first record of a wintering bird here was in 1980 but since 2005 they have been recorded every other winter or so. Rare or scarce waders seen on the lough include two Avocets on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1996, two Ruff on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2000, eight Curlew Sandpipers on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1963 and singles of Spotted Redshank on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2017 and 10<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

Galway City is renowned among birders for its gulls so it is no surprise that the lough has recorded a few species of note. Iceland Gulls have been seen here occasionally and the frequency of their occurrence is usually a reflection of how good a year it is locally for 'white-wingers'. At least three were present in March 2018 and a Glaucous Gull was present for a while during February. Mediterranean Gulls are infrequent visitors, with records of single birds present during several different months across

the year (including two different fresh juveniles seen in July 2018 so far). An adult Ring-billed Gull on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2016 was followed by two adults on 4<sup>th</sup> March. They looked like the 'usual' birds from Nimmo's Pier slipway. A single adult Kittiwake on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018 appeared out of place and unwell but flew off strongly after spending some time roosting. Those, plus the expected five other species, brings my site-total of gulls to ten. No gulls breed on the lough but fresh juvenile Herring Gulls (from nearby rooftop nest sites) and Black-headed Gulls (from Lough Corrib and further afield) can be seen in July soon after fledging.

Small numbers of Common Tern can regularly be seen around the lough between April and September. These are foraging birds which probably originate from the nearby breeding colony that moves between Mutton, Hare and Rabbit Islands. A breeding record at the lough around 2014 involved a pair with two eggs laid on a section of pontoon (C. Forkan, pers. comm.). Suitable breeding habitat for terns is limited but the continued presence of birds engaging in courtship and display suggested that establishing a colony here could be possible should sufficient nesting space be provided. With this in mind, staff and students from the Marine and Freshwater Research Centre, GMIT, initiated a pilot project in 2018 to assess this potential. With the assistance of Conservation Volunteers Galway, Port of Galway Sea Scouts and NPWS, two tern rafts were constructed and positioned out in the southern half of the lough where the water is deepest. The rafts were launched on 30<sup>th</sup> April and two Common Terns were seen investigating them the next day! Two pairs took up residence, one per raft, and the presence of eggs was confirmed on 30<sup>th</sup> May (clutch of three eggs each). A brood of three chicks hatched on the north raft in June and their progress was monitored, with regular feeding visits by the parents and wing exercising by the chicks noted. After a period of suspicious inactivity, a visit by GMIT staff to the raft on 9<sup>th</sup> July confirmed that the three chicks had died, most likely because of predation by a mammal but this could not be confirmed. The clutch of eggs on the south raft failed to hatch. Despite no chicks fledging, the breeding activity witnessed this year has been taken as an encouraging sign and plans are already underway to improve conditions and predator-proofing for next year.

Arctic Terns are infrequently recorded around the lough, usually after periods of stormy weather when they come in to take shelter. Sandwich Tern is rare with just two records in the past year. Little and Roseate Tern have not been recorded here to the best of my knowledge. Two unseasonal records of Black Tern involve one in January 1989 (thought to be the same as that seen on the River Corrib the previous December) and one on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.

While waterbirds feature heavily as notable avifauna of the site, the saltmarsh, reedbed, meadows and scrub along the north and east side of the lough provide a little piece of rural habitat in an otherwise urban setting and support three breeding pairs of Stonechat, several breeding pairs of Meadow Pipit, a pair of Reed Buntings, at least two singing male Sedge Warblers; occasionally a singing male Whitethroat can be heard plus a few Willow Warblers, Blackcaps and even a Chiffchaff thrown in

for good measure. The meadow which has been allowed to flourish along the north side of the lough beside The Huntsman Inn is a testament to the effectiveness of low-key biodiversity management practices. In a short space of time, it has attracted breeding Stonechat and Meadow Pipit as well as providing foraging opportunities for flocks of Goldfinch and Linnet. Long may it continue! One or two Pheasants frequent the small area of fields and scrub along the eastern shore where the cattle are and prove a lot more difficult to find that you would think! During cold weather, these fields are a good place to look for thrushes, especially Song Thrush and Redwing. Birds of prey are scarce enough but Sparrowhawk and Peregrine are those which are most frequently noted. Kestrel is rare but seemingly just about annual and there have been records of Buzzard (June 2004) and Hen Harrier (July 2004). Barn Owl, Stock Dove, Jay and Cuckoo have all been recorded but as fleeting visitors or fly-overs only. The gardens along Lough Atalia Road held a flock of 10 Waxwings on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2012 and a vocal Siberian Chiffchaff made its way through there on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

The overall Lough Atalia site-list comes to 118 species, based on reports submitted to eBird, Irish Birding and Aonghus O'Donnail's database of rare and scarce birds seen in Co. Galway. This figure should be considered a minimum as I am, no doubt, missing a few species. For example, I have no records of Pochard, Merlin, Knot or Little Gull from around the lough but it is likely that they have occurred at some stage.

While I have yet to find a true rarity around the lough, some of the best sightings for me have been those of common enough Irish species which do not normally occur here, so they are good for 'the patch': a pair of Shoveler with the Wigeon and Teal flock on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2016, a Woodcock flying around in broad daylight on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2017, a Coot tucked up against the saltmarsh bank on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2017 and a lovely view of a Stock Dove flying over on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2018. If I am lucky enough to find a rarity here, I imagine it will be something along the lines of a male Green-winged Teal but I wouldn't say no to the first Irish record of Willet!

I hope this article has been useful as an overview of the birds that occur at Lough Atalia. While it might not initially seem like the most productive of birding sites, the list is a lot longer than most people would expect and it just goes to show what can be seen if an area is checked often enough. So, the next time you are stuck in traffic on the Lough Atalia Road, have a glance out the window and see if a Common Tern, Little Egret, Greenshank or Shelduck can make the gridlock more bearable!

If you think you can add some species to the list, please get in touch with me by e-mail at [niall.keogh@research.gmit.ie](mailto:niall.keogh@research.gmit.ie) or submit your records to the eBird hotspot [www.ebird.org/hotspot/L1103765](http://www.ebird.org/hotspot/L1103765)

Niall Keogh

Peak Monthly Waterbird Counts at Lough Atalia, Co. Galway from September 2016 to July 2018

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mute Swan	19	13	15	15	12	2	3	8	27	2	13	15
Black Swan		1		1	1			1				
Shelduck	69	93	64	16	4						13	45
Wigeon	175	168	91	18					9	63	163	124
Gadwall	41	78	43	13						9	38	42
Teal	82	77	48	16		1			10	16	65	93
Mallard	20	11	8	15	14	20	38	12	34	24	24	28
Shoveler												2
Scaup	3	2			1						2	3
Goldeneye											1	
Red-breasted Merganser	6	3	4	2					8		8	2
Great Northern Diver	1	1	1	1								
Cormorant	9	6	6	4	4	6	11	5	13	8	8	19
Shag	2	2	1	1	1					2	3	2
Little Egret	3	3	5	2	6	9	30	12	20	5	4	3
Grey Heron	4	2	2	3	3	11	12	2	18	3	13	6
Little Grebe	17	11	3		1			2	14	26	30	24
Great Crested Grebe	1		1						1	1		
Coot							1					
Oystercatcher	77	30	145	6	4		1	4	25	18	14	88
Ringed Plover		2										
Golden Plover			1									
Lapwing	190	16	22			5	3		29	32	250	190
Whimbrel				1	13		1	1				
Curlew	2	1	3	1	1	2	5	4	5	4	11	
Bar-tailed Godwit					3							
Black-tailed Godwit	120								1	1		

<b>Turnstone</b>	7	6	3	1					6	3	2	7
<b>Dunlin</b>	7											
<b>Common Sandpiper</b>		1					2	1	1			
<b>Greenshank</b>	13	9	11	4		1	12	18	14	14	8	10
<b>Redshank</b>	70	39	35	86		51	65	37	121	89	29	30
<b>Spotted Redshank</b>							1		1			
<b>Woodcock</b>			1									
<b>Snipe</b>	6	2	46	1					2	8	6	16
<b>Jack Snipe</b>			5									
<b>Common Tern</b>				6	13	10	12	2				
<b>Arctic Tern</b>				6	1		2		2	1		
<b>Kittiwake</b>	1											
<b>Sandwich Tern</b>					3		1					
<b>Black-headed Gull</b>	106	125	130	43	38	28	85	44	103	125	211	175
<b>Mediterranean Gull</b>	1		1				1		1			1
<b>Common Gull</b>	5	19	12	3	1	1	4		1	10	10	49
<b>Lesser Black-backed Gull</b>		1	7	6	10	4	11	9	1	1		
<b>Herring Gull</b>	54	65	55	35	45	32	38	75	44	43	10	85
<b>Iceland Gull</b>	1	1	3									
<b>Glaucous Gull</b>		1										
<b>Great Black-backed Gull</b>	2	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	2	1	1
<b>Kingfisher</b>	1	1	1				1		1			1
<b>Total</b>	1115	794	777	309	182	186	344	240	515	510	937	1061

## BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland) 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2018

QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT COMPILED BY CHRIS PEPIATT

DATE OF ISSUE: 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019

1st January: 2 Snow Bunting, again present, Mutton Island, Galway city. (1)

5th January: 1st Win. Glaucous Gull, Blackrock, Salthill, Galway city (Brendan Dunne).

7th January: 3-2nd Win. Iceland Gull & Sandwich Tern, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city (Tom Cuffe).

10th January: 2-1st Win. Iceland Gull, Carn Ard, Galway city (Ann Fleming).

10th January: Ad. Kumlien's Gull, again present, Omev Island. (2)

10th January: 1st Win. Glaucous Gull, Omev Island (Dermot Breen).

10th January: Ruff, Glennamaddy turlough (Paidi Cullinan).

11th January: Glossy Ibis, Eyrephort, Sky Road, W. of Clifden (Martin O'Malley). (3)

11th January: Fem. Eider, Inishturk (Dermot Breen).

11th January: Snowy Owl, N of Bearna Golf Club.

12th January: Male Hen Harrier, Derravonniff, Screebe (Dermot Breen).

13th January: Lesser Scaup, Lydacan turlough (Paul Troake).

13th January: Male Ring-necked Duck, Cahermore turlough (Paul Troake). (4)

13th January: 2 Great White Egret, again present, Lough Corrib. (5)

13th January: 60 Greenland White-fronted Goose & 2 Greylag Goose, Rahasane turlough (Tom Murtagh).

13th January: Common Buzzard, Kilbannon, Tuam (Ted Steede).

14th January: Spotted Redshank, Kilcaimin (Paul Troake).

14th January: Lesser Scaup, Cahermore turlough (Paidi Cullinan). (6)

14th January: Fem. Ring-necked Duck, Termon North turlough (Paidi Cullinan).

14th January: 53 Greenland White-fronted Goose, Belclare turlough (Eamonn Delaney).

15th January: Snow Bunting, Cloosh (John Murphy).

15th January: 2 (Ad. & 1st. Win.) Iceland Gull & 2 (Ad. & 3rd Win.) Ring-billed Gull, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city (Brian McCloskey).

16th January: 2 Snow Bunting, Keeraunnagark South, Nr. Rossaveal (John Murphy).

16th January: 2-2nd Win. Glaucous Gull & Iceland Gull, Bunowen Pier, Ballyconneely (Dermot Breen).

21st January: Short-eared Owl, Curraghline, Lough Corrib (Dylan Storey-Branagh).

25th January: Kittiwake, Lough Atalia, Galway city (Niall Keogh).

26th January: Dipper & Kingfisher, Waterside, Galway city (Niall Keogh).

27th January: 3 Tundra ("*rossicus*") Bean Goose, Belclare turlough (Eamonn Delaney). (7)

27th January: Slavonian Grebe, Newtownlynch Pier (Paul Troake).

27th January: 90 Whooper Swan, Sliabh Rua, Nr. Headford (Neil Sharkey).

29th January: 9 Ruff, Kiltiernan turlough (Paul Troake).

29th January: 60 Whooper Swan & 69 Greenland White-fronted Goose (one with a GPS collar), Belclare turlough (John Murphy, Dermot Breen & Chris Peppiatt).

3rd February: 2nd Win. White-tailed Eagle & Ringtail Hen Harrier, Angliham, Lough Corrib (Cathal Forkan). (8)

3rd February: 13 Pink-footed Goose, Belclare turlough (Eamonn Delaney). (9)

4th February: 26 Greenland White-fronted Goose & Knot, Rostaff Lake, Co. Galway/Co. Mayo border (Dermot Breen).

4th February: Ad. Win Foster's Tern, again present, Kinvara. (10)

4th February: 10 Long-tailed Duck & 6 Black-throated Diver, Doorus-Aughinish, Co. Galway/Clare border (Niall Keogh).

4th February: 13 Pink-footed Goose, again present, Belclare turlough.

4th February: 4+ Brambling, Blindwell turlough (John Small).

5th February: Hawfinch, Nr. Lydacan turlough (Paul Troake).

5th February: 2 drake Ring-necked Duck, Kiltiernan turlough (Paul Troake). (11)

5th February: 2 1st Win. Iceland Gull, Ardahan (Paul Troake).

7th February: Pacific Diver, 3 Spotted Redshank and Purple Sandpiper, Tawin (Petteri Lehikoinen). (12)
7th February: 2 Chiffchaff, Waterside, Galway city (Niall Keogh).
8th February: 3 Ad. Ring-billed Gull & 3 (2-1st Win. & 2nd Win.) Iceland Gull, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city (Petteri Lehikoinen & Niall Keogh).
8th February: 2-2nd Win. Iceland Gull, Mutton Island, Galway city (Niall Keogh).
9th February: Black Swan, again present, Lough Atalia, Galway city. (13)
9th February: Long-eared Owl, Coole Park, Gort (Paul Troake).
10th February: 300+ Shoveler, Ballindooley/Castlegar, Galway city (Neil Ellis).
11th February: 78 Gadwall, Lough Atalia, Galway city (Niall Keogh).
12th February: Recently dead Little Auk, White Strand, Tully, Renvyle (Dermot Breen).
13th February: White-phase Gyrfalcon, Bunowen Pier, Ballyconneely (Graham Roberts).
14th February: 2 (1st & 2nd Win.) Glaucous Gull, Ballyconneely (Paidí Cullinan & Brian McCloskey).
14th February: Ringtail Hen Harrier & 2 Peregrine, Angliham, Lough Corrib (Paidí Cullinan & Brian McCloskey).
14th February: Glaucous Gull, Lough Atalia, Galway city (Sean Walsh).
14th February: Mediterranean Gull, Mannin Strand, Ballyconneely (Dermot Breen).
16th February: 2 Ad. Iceland Gull, Spiddal (Alex Ash).
17th February: Whimbrel, Pollagh, Kinvara (Paul Troake).
17th February: 3 Long-tailed Duck, Kinvara Bay (Paul Troake).
17th February: 5 Long-tailed Duck, Island Eddy (Paul Troake).
17th February: Water Rail, Loch Chró na gCadhain, Inis Meáin (Fearghas Mac Lochlainn).
18th February: 6 Iceland Gull, Rossaveal (Alex Ash).
19th February: Barn Owl, Monivea (Paidí Cullinan).
19th February: Common Buzzard, Glenamaddy (Joanne Monaghan).
21st February: 5 Long-tailed Duck, Tawin (Paidí Cullinan).
22nd February: 9 Iceland Gull, Rossaveal (Paul Troake).
23rd February: 5 Glaucous Gull & 3 Iceland Gull, Ballyconneely area (Dermot Breen).
23rd February: Glaucous Gull & 2 Iceland Gull, Murvey (Dermot Breen).
23rd February: 5 Greenland White-fronted Goose & male Hen Harrier, North-west of Spiddal (Paul Troake).
23rd February: 4 Purple Sandpiper, Spiddal (Paul Troake).
25th February: 10 Iceland Gull, Rossaveal (Alex Ash).
25th February: Red Grouse, Carnagopple Bog, Nr. Mountbellew (Paidí Cullinan).
26th February: Barn Owl, Oranhill, Oranmore (John Curley).
27th February: 11 Iceland Gull & 5 Mediterranean Gull, Rossaveal (Dermot Breen).
27th February: 2 Sandwich Tern, Renmore, Galway city (Niall Keogh).
28th February: 2 Ruff, Spotted Redshank & 75+ Pintail, Rahasane turlough (Paul Troake).
1st March: 5 Jack Snipe, 7 Fieldfare & 70 Redwing, Lough Atalia, Galway city (Niall Keogh).
1st March: Jack Snipe, Renmore Lagoon, Galway city (Niall Keogh).
2nd March: 2nd yr. Kumlien's Gull & Ad. Ring-billed Gull, Waterside, Galway city (Niall Keogh). (14)
2nd March: 3-2nd yr. Iceland Gull, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city (Niall Keogh).
2nd March: 3rd yr. Iceland Gull, Aughrus Point (Dermot Breen).
2nd March: 2-2nd yr. Iceland Gull & 3rd yr. Glaucous Gull, Ross Beach (Dermot Breen).
3rd March: 13 Pink-footed Goose, again present, Belclare turlough.
3rd March: 14 (12 Ad. & 2-2nd Win.) Mediterranean Gull & 11 Iceland Gull, between Rossaveal and Loughaunwillan (Dermot Breen).
5th March: 8 Iceland Gull, Mutton Island, Galway city (Niall Keogh).
5th March: 42 Whooper Swan, Kiltiernan turlough (Paul Troake).
7th March: 2 Manx Shearwater, Galway Bay, between Rossaveal and Black Head (Niall Keogh).
9th March: 143 Whooper Swan & 79 Greenland White-fronted Goose, Rahasane turlough (Tom Murtagh).

10th March: 2nd yr. Iceland Gull & Ruff, Cahermore turlough (Paul Troake).
12th March: 7 Yellowhammer, Termon turloughs (Paidí Cullinan).
14th March: 2-2nd yr. Iceland Gull, Belclare turlough (Paidí Cullinan).
16th March: Merlin, Lough Cútra (Paidí Cullinan).
16th March: Green Sandpiper, Ballyconneely Golf Course (Mike Badley).
18th March: Wheatear, Ballyconneely (Mike Badley).
19th March: 6 Sand Martin, Waterside, Galway city (Tom Cuffe).
31st March: 6 (Ad. & 5-2nd yr.) Iceland Gull, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city (Tom Cuffe).

#### NOTES:

- (1) These Snow Buntings had been present since late in December 2017 and were seen again on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2018.
- (2) The adult Kumlien's Gull had been present since at least the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2017; it was also seen on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January and the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2018.
- (3) The Glossy Ibis was present until at least the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2018, having also been seen on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of January. Possibly the same bird that was present on Inishmore on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 2017.
- (4) A drake Ring-necked Duck was also present at Cahermore turlough on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2018.
- (5) This species is now resident at Lough Corrib. Two birds were recorded in the Muckrush/Angliham area in December 2017 and there were further records on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January, 4<sup>th</sup> of February (two birds), 14<sup>th</sup> of February, 15<sup>th</sup> of February, 20<sup>th</sup> of February and 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2018.
- (6) A male Lesser Scaup was present at Rahasane turlough in November and December 2017. It is possible that this was the same bird as seen in 2017 and the same as was seen at Lydacan turlough on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 2018.
- (7) The number of birds present at Belclare turlough had risen from 3 on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January to 4 on the next day (28<sup>th</sup> of January). The observer on the second day was Dylan Storey-Branagh.
- (8) The White-tailed Eagle was present in the Angliham area until the 27<sup>th</sup> of February at least; it was sighted on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2018.
- (9) This small flock of Pink-footed Geese stayed in the area until the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March at least (recorded on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February and the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2018).
- (10) The long-staying Foster's Tern, which returned again during October 2017, was also seen on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 2018.
- (11) Two drake Ring-necked Ducks were also recorded at this site on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February, with single drakes present on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February and the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2018.
- (12) Was the Pacific Diver recorded at Tawin the bird that was seen in previous years in the same area?
- (13) This escapee is considered to be the same individual that was present in the Nimmo's Pier/Lough Atalia area during the summer of 2017.
- (14) The second year Kumlien's Gull was again recorded nearby, at the Long Walk, Galway city, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2018.

#### HIGHLIGHTS:

Pacific Diver (returning), Glossy Ibis, Lesser Scaup, at least three Ring-necked Duck, Gyrfalcon, two Kumlien's Gull, four Tundra Bean Goose, Slavonian Grebe and Hawfinch. Long-staying Foster's Tern, White-tailed Eagle and Great White Egret (two birds recorded).

#### SPRING ARRIVALS:

Manx Shearwater (7<sup>th</sup> March), Wheatear (18<sup>th</sup> March), Sand Martin (19<sup>th</sup> March).

#### OTHER BEASTIES:

- 17th February: Otter, Cregg River, just East of Lough Corrib (David McNicholas).  
 19th February: Otter, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city (Niall Keogh).  
 27th February: Bottle-nosed Dolphin, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city (Niall Keogh).  
 5th March: Bottle-nosed Dolphin, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city.